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The Sunnah of Managing Sexual Relations When a Husband has More Than One Wife in Islam

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful!

When a Muslim husband takes a new wife who is a virgin while already having other wives whom are matrons, his new wife will be entitled to seven days with her new husband. However, if the new wife is a matron and the other wife is a virgin, the husband in question will be required to spend three days with his new wife. This fact is evident from the hadith of Bukhari wherein Anas (RA) reportedly said: "**It is the Prophet's (P.B.U.H.) tradition that if someone marries a virgin and he has already a matron wife, he should then stay for seven days with**

her (the virgin) and then by turns; and if someone marries a matron and already has a virgin wife, he should stay with her (the matron) for three days, and then by turns (among all his wives)." Furthermore, after the established timeframe of the wife in question has elapsed, the husband will then spend time with all of his wives in turns. This fact is evident from the hadith of Imam Muslim wherein Abd al-Malik bin Abu Bakr bin Abd al-Rahman bin al-Harith bin Hisham reported on the authority of his father from Umm Salama (RA) who reportedly said: "**When Allah's Messenger (P.B.U.H.) married Umm Salama, he stayed with her for three nights (she was a matron), and said: 'There is no lack of estimation on the part of your husband for you. If you wish I can stay with you for a week, but in case I stay with you for a week, then I shall have to stay for a week with all my wives**.'"

With this being said, if a husband is physically able, he is even permitted to have sexual intercourse with all of his wives in a single night; provided that he is alone with only one wife at a time. The evidence for this ruling is the hadith of Bukhari wherein Anas bin Malik (RA) reportedly said: "**The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) used to pass by (have sexual relation with) all his wives in one night, and at that time he had nine wives**." Likewise, after the initial timeframe allotted for a new wife

based on her status as a virgin or matron has elapsed, any wife may forfeit her conjugal rights if she so wishes. This fact is evident from the hadith of Bukhari wherein Ayesha (RA) reportedly said: "**Sawda bint Zam'a (RA) gave up her turn to me (Ayesha), and so the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) used to give me (Ayesha) both my day and the day of Sawda**." Furthermore, in another hadith of Bukhari, Ayesha (RA) is reported to have said: "**During his fatal ailment, Allah's Apostle (P.B.U.H.) used to ask his wives, 'Where shall I stay tomorrow? Where shall I stay tomorrow?' He was looking forward to Aisha's turn. So all his wives allowed him to stay where he wished, and he stayed at Aisha's house till he died there. Aisha added: 'He died on the day of my usual turn at my house. Allah took him unto Him while his head was between my chest and my neck and his saliva was mixed with my saliva.'**"

Lastly, as long as it is not the husband's intent to neglect a particular wife, he is even permitted to change the order of his rotation among his wives if either his urges are stronger on a particular day for a specific wife or a specific wife's desire for him is greater on a particular day. This fact is evident from Surah Al-Ahzab (33:51) of the Quran which reads: "**Thou mayest defer (the turn of) any of them that thou pleasest, and thou mayest receive any thou pleasest: and there is no blame**

on thee if thou invite one whose (turn) thou hadst set aside. This were nigher to the cooling of their eyes, the prevention of their grief, and their satisfaction - that of all of them - with that which thou hast to give them: and Allah knows (all) that is in your hearts: and Allah is All-Knowing, Most Forbearing."

Further evidence is found in the hadith of Imam Muslim wherein Anas (RA) reportedly said: **"Allah's Apostle (P.B.U.H.) had nine wives. So when he divided (his stay) with them, the turn of the first wife did not come but on the ninth (day). They (all the wives) used to gather every night in the house of one where he had to come (and stay that night). It was (the night when he had to stay) in the house of 'A'isha (RA), when Zainab (RA) came there. He (the Holy Prophet) stretched his hand towards her (Zainab), whereupon she ('A'isha) said: 'It is Zainab (inquiring if she is being chosen).' Allah's Apostle (P.B.U.H.) then withdrew his hand. There was an altercation between the two until their voices became loud ... there came to her ('A'isha) Abu Bakr (her father), and spoke to her in stern words and said: 'Do you behave like this?'"** Additionally, another hadith in the collection of Imam Muslim that was narrated by Hisham reports on the authority of his father that 'A'isha (RA) used to say: **"Does the woman not feel shy of offering herself to a man?' Then Allah the Exalted and Glorious revealed this verse: 'You may defer any of them you wish and take to yourself any you wish.' I ('A'isha**

said): 'It seems to me that your Lord hastens to satisfy your (the Prophet's) desire.'"

In light of the above mentioned information, it is important to note that whenever a husband has more than one wife he can expect jealousy to ensue among them from time to time. As such, he should be patient with them and considerate of their nature; because, Surah Al-Nisa (4:129) of the Quran clearly says: "**You are never able to be fair and just as between women, even if it is your ardent desire: But turn not away (from a woman) altogether, so as to leave her (as it were) hanging (in the air). If ye come to a friendly understanding, and practice self-restraint, Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.**" What is more, Abu Hurayra (RA) narrated in a hadith of Imam Muslim that Allah's Messenger (P.B.U.H.) reportedly said, "**A believing man should not despise a believing woman; if he dislikes one of her characteristics, he will be pleased with another.**" Likewise, a hadith in the collection of Abu Dawud that was narrated by Mu'awiya ibn Hayda states: "**I asked the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) what is the right of someone's wife over him? He said, 'That you feed her when you eat and clothe her when you clothe yourself and do not strike her face. Do not malign her and do not keep apart from her, except in the house**.'" What is more, the wives should also be patient and considerate towards

their husband; because, according to a hadith of Abu Hurayra in the collection of Tirmidhi, the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) reportedly said: "**The most perfect of believers are those most perfect of character; and the best of you are the best of you to your spouses**."

Lastly, at all cost, a wife should avoid being vindictive and refuse to have sexual intercourse with her husband. The evidence for this admonition is the hadith of Imam Muslim wherein Abu Huraira (RA) narrated that Allah's Messenger (P.B.U.H.) reportedly said: "**When a man invites his wife to his bed and she does not come, and he (the husband) spends the night being angry with her, the angels curse her until morning**." The importance of sex is so important in a relationship that a wife cannot fast voluntarily without her husband's permission. This fact is evident from the narration of Abu Huraira that was collected in a hadith of Bukhari which reports that the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) allegedly said: "**A woman should not fast (optional fasts) except with her husband's permission if he is at home (staying with her)**."

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